

Talk About the Economy, Stupid!

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Talk about the Economy!

The economy has taken it on the chin this year. The stock market has lost over 30% of its value in the last year. This translated in many of our members losing 30% of their retirement funds—some of them are already using them! These losses are on everyone's mind—and many of our members are afraid. Take a few minutes to watch CNN and you'll know why! The elephant is sitting in the living room, folks, so we'd better talk about it!

Crisis Can Be a Golden Opportunity.

While in one sense this is bad news, this is also a golden opportunity for the church to bear witness to its hope and to the Source of this hope. Our ultimate security is not in stock and bonds, but in the Creator of this world, the Christ who brought us life everlasting, and the Spirit who abides within us to remind us of this Source and this hope. While these can be frightening times, we have the ultimate security—personal and social. So we have nothing to fear and everything to gain by sharing openly about the unrest in our economy.

Talk About the Economy with Your Leaders.

If you are unsure exactly what to say about the economy, don't hesitate to call your church leaders. Many of them will know exactly what has happened and what it means for our members' investments. Take advantage of their expertise to clarify your own understandings. Not only will you get an education, but you'll also deepen valuable relations with some key members. Don't be afraid to let members share their gifts.

Talk about the Economy Publicly.

Talk about the economy and its impact on our members at your next session meeting. Encourage session members and other leaders to share honestly about their own situations and how the downturn has impacted them. One thing you'll all discover is that not all people have been affected equally. Their varied perspectives will reach and touch varied people; it also helps the whole congregation to gather around those members most affected. And some members may already desire—when invited—to help the church with special gifts to make up any shortfalls.

Pastors have a unique opportunity to incorporate illustrations in their sermons about security, stewardship, money, trust, hope, etc. We have been silent long enough! It's time to talk about Christian life in the United States, and how we can be faithful to God and to God's people in concrete, economic ways. If you're struggling to find a scripture passage, look at the lectionary. Since Jesus spoke more about money and possessions than any other subject except the kingdom of God, the gospels are filled with words of perspective and hope. Give them a try!

Talk about the Economy Personally.

When you're drinking coffee in someone's kitchen and talking about all the things we talk about in pastoral visits, mention the economy and let your members talk personally about how they affected. You will be amazed how freely people will talk. This opens the door for you to bring a personal word of hope to members who may be frightened—and believing that they're the only ones frightened! Your words assure them that they are not alone nor are they abandoned.

Help Your Members Help You!

A few of your members are able and willing to help support the church during these shaky economic times. All they need is an invitation! Most will not step forward for fear of appearing “uppity,” but your words of honesty and encouragement will free them to do what they already want to do. Don’t be afraid to visit some of your best supporters, sharing with them the church’s financial situation—for this year and/or the next—and give them the option of helping with a special gift over-and-above the pledge to help the church through this hard time. Don’t beg—just give them the option. Say something like, “I know that you love this church and have helped it in other times of struggle. All I wanted to do was share this information with you and offer you the option to give a special gift to help. It’s not an expectation—it’s simply giving you the option to decide. Whatever you decide is okay with me.” You’ll be surprised how many of your members will respond, “We’ve been wondering how we were going to get by this year, and had hoped that we could do something special.” For more ideas on how to make these visits, contact me. I’ll be happy to help you.

God has blessed us in ways beyond our ability to imagine or to fully appreciate. These troubling hours may help us to grow in faith and trust—if we survive them! So talk about it—and help your members grow!

We’re all in this together!

Send Your Members a Year-End Letter

Some of your members are waiting for your “permission” to help your church’s finances this year. An easy way to offer this option to members is to send a year-end appeal letter to each family in your church family. The average family will receive at least 100 such letters in the next month, but yours will stand out because it’s from the church. Simply send them a letter that says something like this:

Sample Year-End Letter—download and adapt as you’d like—then send to your members!

Dear (Mail-merged name):

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all....The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teacher, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:4-6, 11-12)

We live in interesting times. The economy has hit all of us this year—some harder than others. Many of our congregations are affected by the economic downturns of this year. Their suffering affects us all. Our church exists to help our members to build up their ministry to “build up the body of Christ.”

This year we are inviting each of our members to consider a special year-end gift to support this ministry. This gift is over-and-above any pledges you have made. It’s simply an opportunity to share your joy and your resources with the rest of our members.

Please consider a special mission gift to help support our church family. All gifts to your church will be put to work in serving God within our congregations and our world.

“But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

We’re all in this together,

Danny Dollars

Lotta Loot

Stewardship Committee

Pastor

P.S. Thank you for considering this request for support. You may use the enclosed card and envelope to mail it to the church or simply place your special gift in the offering plate.

(Sample Commitment Card)

Here is my gift...

...to support the First Presbyterian Church in our ministry to our community and our world.

- My check in the amount of \$ _____
- I am interested in information on how I can support our ministry through my estate planning.

Signed _____ Phone number _____

Thank you for your generous support.